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Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

Provisional

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Wednesday, 6 June 2012, 10.45 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Li Baodong	(China)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Briens
	Germany	Mr. Berger
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Portugal	Mr. Vaz Patto
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	Togo	Mr. Menan
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Tatham
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in that country (S/2012/374)

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12-36110 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in that country (S/2012/374)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Margaret Vogt, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2012/374, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in that country.

I now give the floor to Ms. Vogt.

Ms. Vogt: It is an honour to introduce the seventh report of the Secretary-General (S/2012/374) on the work of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA). The report presents the main developments in the Central African Republic during the first half of 2012 — the achievements and, more important, the challenges confronting the Government and people of the Central African Republic — and makes recommendations for the critical action required to address some of those challenges.

While 2011 ended on a note of optimism and expectations for the continuing stabilization of the political landscape in the Central African Republic, 2012 opened with a number of critical developments that dampened that enthusiasm. Four leaders of two politico-military groups were arrested on charges of plans to relaunch the rebellion, and the consultation between the Government and the political parties, including the opposition, on the revision of the electoral code was suspended before a consensus was reached and a bill on a permanent electoral body was sent to Parliament for adoption. Fortunately, the case against the arrested leaders was subjected to legal proceedings. They were granted provisional freedom, and one of them returned to his role as Vice-President of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Steering Committee; he oversaw the completion of the disarmament of the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie (APRD), one of the politico-military groups, the Union des forces de la résistance and the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain in the north-central area of the country, as well as the dismantling of the APRD as a rebel group in May.

In April, the Bureau of the National Assembly returned the bill on the permanent electoral body to the Government because of several irregularities and unconstitutional provisions, despite the near domination of the National Assembly by the ruling Kwa Na Kwa (KNK) party. BINUCA and the international community continue to encourage the authorities, political parties and civil society of the Central African Republic to reach a consensus on this matter, which is crucial to the stability of their country. It is equally important that the Government remain engaged in this review process, and that consensus be reached on the electoral reform process and the structure of a permanent electoral management body. We were very encouraged that the parliament showed independence in spite of the criticism expressed by many that it was dominated by one party, reaffirming our view that it has remained very independent in its modus operandi.

On 15 May, President Bozizé invited leaders of the opposition to begin a constructive dialogue at a date to be determined. Although the opposition parties have expressed their satisfaction with the hand extended to them by the President, they have a number of prerequisites. Those include agreement on, first, the nature and objectives of the dialogue; secondly, identifying stakeholders; thirdly, determining the topics of national interest to be discussed; and fourthly, the signing of a comprehensive political agreement to be endorsed by all stakeholders. Opposition parties and civil society have also requested expertise and support from active United Nations observers, as was done for the last set of consultations. The Policy Mediation Division of the Department of Political Affairs is

already on standby to provide that assistance once the Government has officially requested it.

The Government continues to push for the completion of the disarmament process. In April it convened a meeting of friends in New York at which a budget for completing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process was presented for support. The meeting was important for three reasons: first, the Government was able to show its own people — who had become very critical of the fact that the disarmament process had been suspended for lack of funds — that it was making every effort to seek international support to relaunch the process. Secondly, the meeting presented the international community with a clear budget for what was required and what the Government itself had invested. And, finally, it clarified the Government's commitment to completing the process. The Council will recall that in previous years the Government's political commitment to the process was constantly being questioned; it has now been clearly demonstrated.

The New York meeting was followed up by concrete steps taken by the Government of the Central African Republic towards ensuring the completion of the disarmament process in the North. The Government provided $440,000 from its own resources, which, in addition to United Nations support, enabled disarmament in the north-central area to be completed. Australia has pledged $200,000 and Luxembourg has granted €100,000 towards the continuation of the disarmament process.

The Government has continued the consolidation of the security situation in the Central African Republic, and has focused on taking charge of the security situation since June last year. The Government activated the Chad, Sudan and Central African Republic tripartite agreement and deployed a force to carry out an operation that has led to the stabilization of the north-east.

Following the return of peace to the Vakaga region, the tripartite force has pacified all of the north, including the restive region in and around Birao, enabling the return of the internally displaced population and a resumption of international access to the region. It will be important to launch DDR operations in that region, the only remaining sector where DDR has to take place, as soon as possible, in order not to jeopardize the Government's stabilization efforts. At this critical juncture, it is important that the international community provide the financial support needed to complete the DDR process. We believe that the Government has done its part, and it is now up to us to help complete the work still to be done. Almost no section of the Central African Republic is now inaccessible to us for security reasons, except for pockets here and there, largely areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army.

In the area of security sector reform (SSR), the new road map adopted in mid-February by the national Security Sector Reform Steering Committee and developed with technical support from BINUCA, marks the revival of the SSR process in the Central African Republic. It envisions the formulation of six sub-sectoral strategies, which will be consolidated into a three-year national SSR strategy.

The subsectoral strategy on the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA) and the gendarmerie was recently completed and has been approved by the Ministry of Defence. We have therefore completed the subsectoral strategy for the FACA division and the gendarmerie. A preliminary draft of the subsectoral strategy on the police has also been completed and is undergoing revision. The subsectoral strategy on the democratic control of the security sector, completed in January 2011, is being updated.

The drafting of a subsectoral strategy on the justice sector is currently ongoing. Additional funds and expertise are required to complete the work in the areas of public finance, customs and decentralization, as well as environmental protection. They are currently waiting for BINUCA to provide them with the expertise needed to advance work in that area. The completion of a broad national security sector reform strategy will be an important step forward and should help focus national and international effort in that vital area.

However, local inter-ethnic tension resulting from the most recent conflict in the Vakaga region, in the north-east, persists, as do conflicts between farmers and local communities over grazing rights. Tension between the Muslim community, especially of Chadian extraction, and local communities has also increased, especially following the joint Central African Republic/Chad offensive against the Front populaire pour le redressement (FPR) in January, with many suspected of harbouring fleeing FPR fighters. In that regard, BINUCA plans to launch social cohesion projects, in particular among women, to facilitate reconciliation in Haute-Kotto following the deadly clashes of September

2011, which tore the Goula and Runga communities apart.

BINUCA continues to encourage and enhance the capacity of the National Council for Mediation (NCM). The Council remains poorly resourced at the national level, and is inexistent at the local level. In that regard, BINUCA received funding from the extrabudgetary funds of the Department of Political Affairs to help enhance the Council's capacity and to establish local councils for mediation.

Despite those positive developments among the Central African Republic's political-military parties, two foreign armed groups continue to pose a serious threat to the peace process. The FPR, led by Chadian rebel Baba Laddé, was dislodged following the joint Central African Republic/Chad military strike launched against the stronghold in the prefecture of Nana-Gribizi on 23 January. The operation destroyed the command centre of the group, resulting in the dispersion of its fighters, who launched sporadic attacks and threatened the free movement and security of the population. I am happy to report that that situation has, fortunately, been brought under control as the FACA, in a new wave of enthusiasm, has shown great agility in containing FPR fighters.

The reporting period also witnessed a spike in Lord's Resistance Army attacks in the Central African Republic in the prefectures of Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou. However, there is now a new momentum in national and international efforts to address the LRA challenge in the Central African Republic, and in the subregion as a whole. The coordination of the operations of Ugandan and Central African Republic forces against the LRA has been greatly enhanced with the support of United States military advisers. That may have contributed to the recent arrest of "Brigadier General" Caesar Achellam and the defection of two LRA fighters.

BINUCA has formulated a multifaceted national strategy that would complement steps being taken by the Government of the Central African Republic and United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa in support of the African Union Regional Cooperation Initiative on the LRA. The Office intends to help the Central African Republic to develop a better communication system so as to improve reporting and warning time, replicating the existing early-warning system developed by MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Furthermore, BINUCA is working with national and international partners to put in place a strategy to encourage the defection of LRA fighters, as well as a policy for repatriation to their home countries. Parallel to the regional coordination efforts on a disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration (DDRRR) strategy, BINUCA is facilitating the development of a national DDRRR strategy in the LRA-affected areas of the country. In order to strengthen our footprints in the south-east, last month we deployed two international consultants to Obo to work with the Joint Information and Operations Centre. That deployment was undertaken by BINUCA with very meagre internal resources. We count on the support of Member States to help us continue with the deployment.

The Government continued to experience budgetary difficulties as a result of the stoppage of support by the international community, but has continued to pay the salaries of civil servants. In fact, the Government has prioritized the regular payment of civil servants. From 4 to 19 April, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation held discussions in Bangui on a Government economic programme to be supported by the Fund, with concessional resources under the IMF's Extended Credit Facility. During the discussion, the Government committed to undertaking a number of reforms to strengthen budget execution and to improve transparency. The Government also committed to adjusting petroleum prices to safeguard the budgeted domestic revenues, as approved by parliament in December 2011. In fact, they have already started obtaining some of that subsidy.

Subject to the resolution of a few pending issues, for example, the clearance of payment arrears to members of the Paris Club and the transparent accounting of exceptional revenue from the exploitation of natural resources, the authorities' request could be submitted for approval to the IMF Executive Board before the end of this month.

On the humanitarian front, the situation remains highly precarious and is seriously impacted by the lack of basic health-care infrastructure. Some 75,000 Central Africans remain displaced and living in precarious conditions, out of which more than 20,000 were displaced by the LRA between 2008 and 2011. The situation of those people is very worrisome.

The population of the Central African Republic is constantly at risk because of the extreme level of

vulnerability that the country is facing. Two thirds of the population does not have access to safe drinking water or health-care facilities. The education system is weak. One third of all children nationwide are not attending primary school. An estimated 42 per cent of the population is food- insecure. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is on the increase, especially in Bangui and in the conflict-affected areas. Women are more affected than men, and boys more so than girls.

The Consolidated Appeals Process requesting $134 million remains grossly underfunded, the latest figure being 36 per cent. About 40 humanitarian organizations are struggling to assist an estimated 1.9 million people in desperate need, which is nearly half of the population. It is therefore vital that humanitarian organizations reach people in need, in a country where life expectancy stands at 48 years. I appeal to the Council to sensitize the international community to help address the Central African Republic's need for urgent humanitarian assistance.

The report notes an upsurge in human rights violations, including summary executions, torture, arbitrary arrests and detentions perpetrated by the security and defence forces, particularly by some members of the presidential guard. Such abuses are often carried out in detention centres, with total impunity. BINUCA has been particularly worried by the non-observance of the basic rights of presumption of innocence until proven guilty.

The prolongation of preventive detention, the refusal to grant access to legal counsel to the persons arrested, and the non-compliance with the legal provisions on the duration of custody also remain major challenges in the Central African Republic. BINUCA has constantly pressed the issue of such irregularities with national authorities, including the Minister of Justice and the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Good Governance, but much remains to be done to observe due process in detention and to prevent illegal arrests and detention.

In conclusion, the Central African Republic is at a critical juncture. I said the same thing last year (see S/PV.6687) and I am repeating it this year. It is therefore essential, as reported in the Secretary-General's report, to continue building on the momentum recently created by the Government on the political, security and DDR fronts. The dynamic of peace between the Government and the politico-military groups and the dialogue called by the President offer a real chance for the stabilization of this beautiful country.

The population of the Central African Republic sincerely hopes that it can count on the international community's continued assistance and generosity to help bring about lasting peace in their country through the completion of the DDR process. On behalf of the Secretary-General, may I also express my gratitude to the members of the Council for their continued support. We know that they are seized with bigger dossiers, but the Central African Republic is a dossier that is doable.

In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to Ambassador Jan Grauls, who has spared no effort in the search for resources for sustainable peace and stability in the Central African Republic. He remains a friend of the United Nations family in the Central African Republic and a friend of the Central African Republic itself for what he has accomplished as Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Vogt for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Doubane (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): Today's meeting of the Security Council on the report (S/2012/374) of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in that country provides the delegation of the Central African Republic, which I lead, with an opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I also wish you every success in your work in the month of June. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the leadership of your predecessor in the month of May, His Excellency the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan.

The Central African Republic very much appreciates the work carried out by His Excellency the Secretary-General and thanks him for the fact that peace has returned to our country. I would also like to extend similar gratitude to my colleague, His Excellency Mr. Jan Grauls, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations and outgoing Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding

Commission, for his tireless efforts for the cause of the Central African Republic.

With regard to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic, Ms. Margaret Vogt, and her team, who, at times in difficult conditions, work each day alongside the population of the Central African Republic, we have only two word to say to her — words that she is used to hearing every day when she meets Central Africans. To Margaret we say, from the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

The report that has just been introduced provides an update on the Central African Republic since the last assessment report (S/2011/739), published on 28 November 2011. It reflects the fear, the anguish, the uncertainty, the joy, but above all the hope of a country that wants to close a chapter in its history and begin a different one. We take note of the report and share the majority of its contents. However, that assessment does give rise to some observations and hopes that we would like to share with the Council, following the structure of the text, namely, with regard to the political, security, economic and humanitarian situations. First of all, however, we would like to reiterate the readiness of the Government to take into acco..t the recommendations formulated by the Secretary-General, which chart the course to be followed in order to bring about peace. That is an outcome that everyone has awaited for quite a long time, and especially, of course, the benefits that it can produce.

At the political level, the general elections of 2011 redefined a new political and institutional order. At the same time, they also created some frustration at the absence of an opposition in parliament — which, at a certain point, unsettled national cohesiveness. Having realized the situation, on 15 May His Excellency President François Bozizé began discussions with the entire national political class and civil society on future of the country, with everyone sharing their ideas. The Government hopes that everyone will reach out for the hand that has been extended to every son and daughter of the Central African Republic so that we can finally work together in the service of our country, which today is beset by so many challenges, the most important of which pertains to security.

The draft electoral code that was presented by the Government to the parliament was returned. Discussions on that important document should resume shortly with all the parties involved, for we agree with the international community that peace and stability following the elections depends on the consensual adoption of such a text. Those are conditions that are necessary for development, something which is desired and sought by all the people of the Central African Republic.

With regard to security, it remains the fundamental concern of the Government. We hardly need to point out that without security, any effort at development would remain in vain and destined to fail. As indicated in the report, recent developments on the ground show a glimmer of hope. Today, with the self-disbandment of the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie, the disarmament and demobilization of former rebels of the Front démocratique du people centrafricain, accompanied by the willingness to demobilize clearly demonstrated by other movements — the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix and the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement — the State is gradually regaining control over a large part of its national territory. That will also enable a progressive return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

However, two foreign armed groups continue to sow terror throughout the country. Despite the fact that the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA), with the help of the Chadian forces, were able to destroy the command centres and operational bases of the Front populaire pour le redressement (FPR) of Baba Laddé, a Chadian national, the fact that he remains at large, with his forces scattered, is a source of concern. The defence and security forces are continuing to pursue them.

The Lord's Resistance Army of Joseph Kony, a Ugandan citizen, is terrorizing the east and part of the north-east of the country. Working together in an integrated framework, the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), with the support of some 100 American military advisers, have obtained fairly satisfactory results that, we hope, will make it possible in the near future to put a definitive end to one of the most cruel atrocities of our time. Here I wish to express my Government's gratitude to all actors involved in its quest for peace.

On the economic and humanitarian front, the lack of security in former and current conflict areas has put an end to all development efforts, further impoverishing the

population, particularly its most vulnerable elements: women and children.

The Government, some of its bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are pooling their resources and efforts in order to assist the people, who, fortunately, have not yet lost hope.

For two years now, the Central African Republic has been in negotiations with the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund, with a view to the signing of a programme that would allow it to finance its development. It would be unrealistic to believe that we can achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 in certain areas, particularly that of health, without such support. That does not, however, mean that there is a lack of political will to achieve that goal.

With respect to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), the recent meeting of the friends of the Central African Republic, held jointly by the Government and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) on 5 April in New York, provided an overview of the process and made clear the challenges still to be met. Once again, we would like to thank the Secretary-General and all partners that have supported us in this respect. I should like in particular to mention the assistance of Australia and, more recently, of Luxembourg, as well as the very important contribution of the Peacebuilding Fund.

Using domestic resources, the Government is continuing, and will continue, to implement that policy so as to bring about a definitive peace and enable the people, who have been awaiting it, to enjoy its benefits. But the DDR process cannot be achieved without genuine reform of the security sector, and that is why my country has set itself the objective of ensuring that its defence and security forces are respectful of human rights. Despite a difficult beginning, security sector reform has been under way since February, with the assistance of BINUCA, the United Nations Development Programme and a number of bilateral partners, including France.

We recognize that the area of human rights and the rule of law represents an Achilles heel not only for the Central African Republic but for many other countries are well, because post-conflict countries cannot simply wave a magic wand and change mindsets. The Government will continue with the reforms under way in order to establish a State that genuinely protects and defends human rights. The Government remains aware of the behaviour of certain rogue agents of the forces of law and order, who sometimes, especiallyin conflict areas, violate the fundamental rights of local populations.

The justice system — a bulwark against arbitrariness — is carrying out, and will continue to carry out, its work of protecting those under its jurisdiction, including women and children. Every day in the Central African Republic, we are slowly but surely, in concert with the United Nations and other partners, building a State that truly respects the rule of law. Together we will be able to iron out the imperfections and make up for the shortcomings that have been noted, including those relating to persons awaiting trial and other convicted prisoners, who should benefit from all legal guarantees pertaining to their situation.

Finally, the Government of the Central African Republic would like to take this opportunity to express its deep gratitude for the work of the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Commission, two major instruments that are assisting it in the establishment of the rule of law and good governance; security; the creation of employment zones; and the post-conflict rehabilitation of communities.

The Government and the people of the Central African Republic and the international community all desire and are seeking peace, which is indispensable and remains a precondition for development. That is why the highest authorities of my country are sparing no effort in that quest. Along with Chad and the Sudan, they have established, and are acting together in the framework of, the tripartite force to secure the three-border area, near Darfur.

Along with the Central African subregion, we are cooperating with the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic in securing the country. In the fight against the LRA, we have joined the multinational force established to that end by the African Union, ECCAS and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, with the support of United States military advisers.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2012/374) contains recommendations that represent ways forward to achieve peace. There may sometimes be difficulties, but what alternatives do we have? None, clearly. The Government of the Central African Republic will endeavour to implement those recommendations.

The Central African Republic has only one objective: to build a democratic State that respects the rights of its citizens, who are deeply peace-loving, and devote itself to the well-being of its people and those who choose to live in the country. That is what it is doing, alone and together with friendly countries, the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, and national and international NGOs, to which we are very grateful.

In concluding, let me say that we should never lose sight of the fact that in today's very unstable world, the geographical and geostrategic position of the Central African Republic merits its being given some consideration. We are convinced that to support the Central African Republic in its quest for peace is to contribute to the stability and development of the African continent as a whole..

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.